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SUBJECT: QATAR: 2006 ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (TIP)
REPORT

REF: SECSTATE 3836

11. (U) Sensitive But Unclassified--entire report.

12. (U) Embassy Point of Contact is Political Officer, Farah Chery-Medor. Tel. 974-488-4101 ext. 6453. Fax 974 488-4163. One FS-04 officer spent 34 hours in the preparation of this report cable.

13. (U) Following is post's sixth annual Anti-Trafficking in Persons Report. Answers are keyed to reftel questions.

14. (SBU) Section 21.A. Men and women have been trafficked into situations of coerced labor in Qatar. There are no firm estimates of the total numbers of men and women trafficked into the country. Sources of information on trafficking in persons include other diplomatic missions, government officials, commercial contacts and contacts at quasi-independent NGOs. While the reliability of sources cannot always be ascertained, cross-referencing information among various sources helps to promote accuracy in information gathering.

15. (SBU) Section 21.B. Legislation guiding the sponsorship of expatriate laborers has created conditions that in many cases lead to situations constituting forced labor or slavery. Expatriate laborers are not allowed to leave the country without a signed exit permit or to change employment without a written release from their sponsor. The sponsors have also been known to withhold the passports of the workers. The dependence of foreign laborers on their employer for residency rights, plus the inability to change employment or travel, leaves them vulnerable to abuse. Some sponsors have used this power against their workers. They have withheld their consent to force foreign employees to work for longer periods to avoid having to pay a salary owed to the worker and to extract money from the laborer. Some workers ended up in Qatar's deportation center due to their employer's refusing to pay back wages, withholding their passports, or failing to renew their work visas. Nepalese officials reported that 367 Nepalese workers are being held at the deportation center and have been awaiting repatriation for several months. Law enforcement officials apprehended the workers because they had expired work visas. The country also was a destination for women from East Asia, South Asia, and

Africa who come to the country to work as domestic servants. Some report that they have been forced into domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. They were also the victims of overwork, physical abuse, nonpayment or late payment of wages. The embassies of the Philippines and Indonesia received approximately 700 complaints from housemaids alleging mistreatment by their employers during the year. Complaints included sexual harassment, physical torture or torment, overwork, imprisonment, and maltreatment. Abused domestic servants usually did not press charges for fear of losing their jobs. According to Indonesian officials, a total of 553 Indonesian housemaids ran away from their sponsors during the year.

¶6. (SBU) Section 21.B. Continued. Since the last TIP Report, there has been significant progress in government efforts at addressing trafficking in persons. The government of Qatar began implementing the broad recommendations contained in the anti-trafficking national action plan. In July 2005, the government enacted a law banning the use of camel jockeys under the age of 18. The GOQ repatriated approximately 200 Sudanese underage camel jockeys and established a shelter for TIP victims. A human rights department was established in the Ministry of Interior to receive and process victims of human rights abuses and trafficking in persons. The director of the human rights department was named National Coordinator for TIP issues. Qatar also opened a shelter that can accommodate up to 42 male, female and child trafficking victims and has made operational three hotlines for migrant workers in Arabic, English and Urdu. In January 2006, a new national TIP coordinator was appointed. The new coordinator will have an office as the newly established shelter for trafficking victims. The new coordinator has established a working group to follow-up on implementation of the camel jockey law. In February 2006, the group visited the racing track and confirmed that no children were working there as camel jockeys.

¶7. (SBU) Section 21.C. There are no financial limitations on the government's ability to address TIP. With regard to the situation of domestic workers, there appears to be a cultural-based resistance against what is deemed as interfering in a private issue concerning matters of the home as well as an overall ignorance of the concept of trafficking in persons.

¶8. (SBU) Section 21.D. Although the government has identified various agencies to implement anti-trafficking reforms, it does not systematically monitor its anti-trafficking efforts nor does it make available its assessments of these anti-trafficking efforts.

¶9. (SBU) Section 22.A. The government acknowledged that the use of underage camel jockeys was a trafficking problem. However, it does not acknowledge the problems experienced by domestic workers are a trafficking issue. Officials characterize situations of exploitation or coerced labor as minor labor disputes falling under the purview of the labor law.

¶10. (SBU) Section 22.B. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Civil Service and Housing (Labor Department), Supreme Judicial Council, General Health Authority, General Prosecution, National Human Rights Committee, the Qatar Foundation for Women and Children Protection and the Supreme Council for Family Affairs are all involved in anti-trafficking efforts. As of January 2006, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs has the lead in anti-trafficking efforts.

¶11. (SBU) Section 22.C. In September 2005, the national TIP committee held a press conference to announce the establishment of the shelter for trafficking victims. Announcements about the shelter were also made on a weekly television program and in newspaper articles.

¶12. (SBU) Section 22.D. There are no other known government-supported programs.

¶13. (SBU) Section 22.F. The government is cooperating with quasi-independent organizations such as the National Human Rights Committee and the Qatar Foundation for Women and Children Protection on anti-trafficking efforts. There are no independent civil society or non-governmental organizations (national or international) active in anti-trafficking efforts.

¶14. (SBU) Section 22.G. The government monitors its land border but is not able comprehensively to monitor its extensive shoreline. It monitors immigration and emigration patterns for evidence of trafficking. It previously strengthened visa regulations as a result of shifts in immigration patterns showing evidence of probable prostitution-related activities.

¶15. (SBU) Section 22.H. In July, a human rights department was established in the Ministry of Interior to receive and process victims of human rights abuses and trafficking in persons. The director of the department was named as the national coordinator for trafficking problems. In January 2006, a new national TIP coordinator was appointed to replace the director from the Ministry of Interior. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs is currently the lead organization for coordination and communication between various internal agencies. The government does not have a public corruption task force.

¶16. (SBU) Section 22.J. The government has a national plan of action to address trafficking in persons. Representatives from the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Supreme Judicial Council, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Civil Service and Housing (Labor Department), General Prosecutor, General Health Authority, and the Qatar Foundation for Women and Children Protection were involved in developing the plan of action.

Representatives from the National Human Rights Committee, a quasi-independent human rights organization, were involved in this process as well. The government has not disseminated the action plan.

¶17. (SBU) Section 23.A. Qatar does not have a law specifically prohibiting trafficking in persons. However, on July 28, 2005, Law No. 22, banning the transport, employment, training, and involvement of children under the age of eighteen in camel races, came into force. According to Article 4, anyone who violates the law faces three to ten years' imprisonment and a fine ranging between \$13,000 and \$55,000. In addition to this law, traffickers can also be prosecuted under the Penalty Law of 2004, which bans forced or coerced labor. Those caught breaking the law may receive six months imprisonment or a fine of approximately \$825. In cases involving the employment of minors, the punishment is three years imprisonment or a fine of approximately \$2,700. Also, Articles 318-322 of the Criminal Law address crimes that violate human liberty and sanctity. Specifically, Article 318 prohibits the abduction, seizure or deprivation of an individual's liberty, and Article 322 prohibits forced labor. In 2002, the government also passed a money laundering law (Article 2) that specifically defines as a money laundering crime the handling of money related to trafficking of women and children. Although the new labor law enacted in January 2005 expands some worker rights, the new law does not extend to domestic workers. It is not clear if these laws are being used to prosecute trafficking cases. If fully implemented, however, these laws would be adequate to cover the full scope of trafficking-in-persons.

¶18. (SBU) Section 23.B. The penalty for crimes that violate human liberty and sanctity is imprisonment of not more than ten years. Pimping is punishable by imprisonment of not more than ten years. Forced labor is punishable by imprisonment of not more than six months and a fine not to exceed \$824, or both. Abduction for the purpose of forced labor is punishable by imprisonment of not more than seven years.

¶19. (SBU) Section 23.C. The penalty for rape or forcible sexual assault is imprisonment. The penalty for sexual exploitation is imprisonment and carries with it a minimum sentence of five years and a maximum of fifteen years. Cases involving children carry an automatic fifteen-year sentence.

¶20. (SBU) Section 23.D. Under the Criminal Law, articles 294-299, prostitution is illegal. However, it is not considered a widespread problem. Government officials are currently prosecuting two cases.

¶21. (SBU) Section 23.E. It is not clear if the government prosecuted any trafficking cases this year. No information was provided.

¶22. (SBU) Section 23.F. With regard to laborers and domestic workers, individual employees and companies are complicit in the trafficking in that they knowingly place these workers into situations of coerced labor.

¶23. (SBU) Section 23.G. The Qatari Coast Guard conducts preliminary investigations of illegal immigration for possible human exploitation and can refer cases to the Criminal Investigation and Evidence Division for follow-up if needed. Passport and Immigration investigates cases of visa fraud for signs of organized trafficking. Plainclothes police officers monitor local hotels for signs of prostitution. Suspected prostitutes are investigated for links to local sponsors before arrest and deportation.

¶24. (SBU) Section 23.H. The government has not yet provided any specialized training for government officials in how to investigate and prosecute incidences of trafficking. However, government officials at the Ministry of Interior have agreed to participate in the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), a USDOJ program aimed at training officials in addressing and preventing Qatar's TIP problems.

¶25. (SBU) Section 23.I. The government is not known to cooperate with other governments in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases. However, it coordinated with the Embassy of Sudan in the repatriation of the young Sudanese boys employed as camel jockeys. Also, the government shares information with other countries in the region on trafficking patterns involving prostitution. It works with labor attaches from South Asian countries to resolve cases of labor contract disputes, abuse of domestic servants, and workers present in Qatar without authorization.

¶26. (SBU) Section 23.J. It is not known whether the government extradites persons who are charged with trafficking in other countries.

¶27. (SBU) Section 23.K. Some government support for trafficking is evinced in the enactment of legislation such as the Sponsorship Law, which is authored by government officials and which creates and facilitates TIP situations. For example, the Sponsorship Law engenders situations of bondage and servitude by prohibiting workers from leaving the country or changing employment without the permission of their current sponsor. Finally, the lack of enforcement of criminal statutes and labor laws can be construed as official toleration of TIP activities.

¶28. (SBU) Section 23.L. Unknown/Not applicable.

¶29. (SBU) Section 23.M. Not applicable.

¶30. (SBU) Section 23.N. The government ratified ILO Convention 182 concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor on May 30, 2000. It has also ratified ILO Convention 29 on Forced or Compulsory Labor on March 12, 1998 and has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography on December 14, 2001.

¶31. (SBU) Section 24.A. In September, the government opened a shelter for trafficking victims to serve the needs of abused domestic workers, other laborers and children. The shelter is in a small housing compound and is comprised of fully furnished three-bedroom villas, with two villas each for men, women and children. Each villa can accommodate up to seven people. The administrative building houses a health clinic with a medical doctor working on site. The shelter is under the management of the national trafficking in persons coordinator. However, since its opening, only one woman has stayed at the shelter. The shelter is not utilized because of a lack of awareness of its existence and also because only victims referred by certain organizations and agencies have access to the shelter. The government has also provided assistance to domestic workers who have suffered from abuse in the form of payment of back wages and repatriation, and it will facilitate change of employer rather than deportation in cases where abuse has been proven.

¶32. (SBU) Section 24.B. The government is not known to provide funding or other forms of support to foreign or domestic NGOs for services to victims.

¶33. (SBU) Section 24.C. Possible victims of trafficking are generally deported. They are placed in the deportation center pending resolution of their cases. There are no private shelters.

¶34. (SBU) Section 24.D. The rights of laborers and domestic workers are not respected. They are often treated as criminals. Laborers are kept in the deportation center until their case is resolved. Domestic workers are detained and placed in the deportation center. After their case has been resolved, they are deported. The length of detainment varies greatly. A visit to the deportation center by embassy officials found hundreds of workers detained and awaiting deportation. Some housemaids had been at the center for six months. Some victims are also fined if they are found to be in violation of immigration or other laws.

¶35. (SBU) Section 24.E. The government encourages some victims to assist in their own cases. Some victims can file civil suits or seek legal action against the traffickers. Some sponsors and employers have been known to threaten victims in an attempt to keep them from seeking legal redress. If a victim is a material witness in a court case against the former employer, the victim is permitted to obtain other employment or to leave the country. There is no victim restitution program.

¶36. (SBU) Section 24.F. The government has a shelter for trafficking victims; however, it remains unused. The shelter has a health clinic and a social worker on the premises to assist victims in rebuilding their lives.

¶37. (SBU) Section 24.G. The government does not provide specialized training for government officials in recognizing trafficking and in assisting trafficked victims.

¶38. (SBU) Section 24.H. Not applicable.

¶39. (SBU) Section 24.I. There are no international organizations or NGOs that work with trafficked victims.
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